

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER IV. RORIE MAKES A SPEECH.

SOMEWHAT to his surprise, and much to his delight, Roderick Vawdrey escaped that maternal lecture which he was wont undutifully to describe as a "wiggling." When he entered the drawing-room in full dress, just about ten minutes before the first of the guests was announced, Lady Jane received him with a calm affectionateness, and asked him no questions about his disposal of the afternoon. Perhaps this unusual clemency was because of his twenty-first birthday, Rorie thought. A man could not come of age more than once in his life. He was entitled to some favour.

The dinner-party was as other dinners at Briarwood; all the arrangements perfect; the menu commendable, if not new; the general result a little dull.

The Ashbourne party were among the first to arrive; the duke portly and affable; the duchess delighted to welcome her favourite nephew; Lady Mabel looking very fragile, flower-like, and graceful in her pale-blue gauze dinner-dress. Lady Mabel affected the palest tints, half-colours which were more like the shadows in a sunset sky than any earthly hues.

She took possession of Rorie at once, treating him with a calm superiority, as if he had been a younger brother.

"Tell me all about Switzerland," she said, as they sat side by side on one of the amber ottomans. "What was it that you liked best?"

"The climbing, of course," he answered.

"But which of all the landscapes?"

What struck you most? What impressed you most deeply? Your first view of Mont Blanc, or that wondrous gorge below the Tête Noire—or—?"

"It was all uncommonly jolly. But there's a family resemblance in Swiss mountains, don't you know? They're all white—and they're all peaky. There's a likeness in Swiss lakes, too, if you come to think of it. And Swiss villages, now—don't you think they are rather disappointing?—such a cruel plagiarism of those plaster chalets the image-men carry about the London streets, and no candle-ends burning inside to make 'em look pretty. But I liked Lucerne uncommonly, there was such a capital billiard-table at the hotel."

"Roderick!" cried Lady Mabel, with a disgusted look, "I don't think you have a vestige of poetry in your nature."

"I hope I haven't," replied Rorie devoutly.

"You could see those sublime scenes, and never once feel your heart thrilled or your mind exalted! you can come home from your first Swiss tour and talk about billiard-tables!"

"The scenery was very nice," said Rorie thoughtfully. "Yes; there were times, perhaps, when I was a trifle stunned by all that grand calm beauty, the silence, the solitude, the awfulness of it all; but I had hardly time to feel the thrill when I came bump up against a party of tourists, English or American, all talking the same twaddle, and all patronising the scenery. That took the charm out of the landscape somehow, and I coiled up, as the Yankees say. And now you want me to go into second-hand raptures, and repeat my emotions, as if I were writing

a tourist article for a magazine. I can't do it, Mabel."

"Well, I won't bore you any more about it," said Lady Mabel, "but I confess my disappointment. I thought we should have such nice long talks about Switzerland."

"What's the use of talking of a place? If it's so lovely that one can't live without it, one had better go back there."

This was a practical way of putting things which was too much for Lady Mabel. She fanned herself gently with a great fan of blue cloudy-looking feathers, such a fan as Titania might have used that midsummer night near Athens. She relapsed into a placid silence, looking at Rorie thoughtfully with her calm blue eyes.

His travels had improved him. That bronze hue suited him wonderfully well. He looked more manly. He was no longer a beardless boy, to be patronised with that gracious elder-sister air of Lady Mabel's. She felt that he was further off from her than he had been last season in London.

"How late you arrived this evening," she said after a pause. "I came to kettle-drum with my aunt, and found her quite anxious about you. If it hadn't been for your telegram from Southampton, she would have fancied there was something wrong."

"She needn't have fidgeted herself after three o'clock," answered Rorie coolly; "my luggage must have come home by that time."

"I see. You sent the luggage on before, and came by a later train?"

"No, I didn't. I stopped halfway between here and Lyndhurst, to see some old friends."

"Flattering for my aunt," said Mabel. "I should have thought she was your oldest friend."

"Of course she has the prior claim. But as I was going to hand myself over to her bodily at seven o'clock, to be speechified about, and rendered generally ridiculous, after the manner of young men who come of age, I felt I was entitled to do what I liked in the interval."

"And therefore you went to the Tempests," said Mabel, with her blue eyes sparkling. "I see. That is what you do when you do what you like."

"Precisely. I am very fond of Squire Tempest. When I first rode to hounds it was under his wing. There's my mother

beckoning me; I am to go and do the civil to people."

And Roderick walked away from the ottoman to the spot where his mother stood, with the Duke of Dovedale at her side, receiving her guests.

It was a very grand party, in the way of blue blood, landed estates, diamonds, lace, satin and velvet, and self-importance. All the magnates of the soil, within accessible distance of Briarwood, had assembled to do honour to Rorie's coming of age. The dining-tables had been arranged in a horse-shoe, so as to accommodate seventy people, in a room which in its every-day condition would not have been too large for thirty. The orchids and ferns upon this horse-shoe table made the finest floricultural show that had been seen for a long time. There were rare specimens from New Granada and the Philippine Islands; wondrous flowers lately discovered in the Sierra Madre; blossoms of every shape and colour from the Cordilleras; richest varieties of hue, golden yellow, glowing crimson, creamy white; butterfly flowers and pitcher-shaped flowers, that had cost as much money as prize pigeons, and seemed as worthless, save to the connoisseur in the article. The Vawdrey racing plate, won by Roderick's grandfather, was nowhere by comparison with those wondrous tropical blossoms, that fairy forest of fern. Everybody talked about the orchids, confessed their comparative ignorance of the subject, and complimented Lady Jane.

"The orchids made the hit of the evening," Rorie said afterwards. "It was their coming of age, not mine."

There was a moderate and endurable amount of speechifying by-and-by, when the monster double-crowned pines had been cut, and the purple grapes, that were almost as big as pigeons' eggs, had gone round.

The Duke of Dovedale assured his friends that this was one of the proudest moments of his life, and that if Providence had permitted a son of his own to attain his majority, he, the duke, could have hardly felt more deeply than he felt to-day. He had—arra—arra—known this young man from childhood, and—had—er—um—never found him guilty of a mean action—or—arra—discovered in him a thought unworthy of an English gentleman.

This last is felt to be a strong point, as it implies that an English gentleman must

needs be much better than any other gentleman.

A Continental gentleman might, of course, be guilty of an unworthy thought and yet pass current, according to the loose morality of his nation. But the English article must be flawless.

And thus the duke meanders on for five minutes or so, and there is a subdued gush of approval, and then an uncomfortable little pause, and then Rorie gets up in his place next the duchess, and returns thanks.

He tells them all how fond he is of them and of the soil that bred them. How he means to be a Hampshire squire, pure and simple, if he can. How he has no higher ambition than to be useful and to do good in this little spot of England which Providence has given him for his inheritance. How, if he should go into Parliament by-and-by, as he has some thoughts of attempting to do, it will be in their interests that he will join that noble body of legislators; that it will be their benefit he will have always nearest at heart.

"There is not a tree in the forest that I do not love," cried Rorie, fired with his theme, and forgetting to stammer; "and I believe there is not a tree, from the Twelve Apostles to the Knightwood Oak, or a patch of gorse from Picket Post to Stony Cross, that I do not know as well as I know the friends round me to-night. I was born in the forest, and may I live and die and be buried here. I have just come back from seeing some of the finest scenery in Europe; yet, without blushing for my want of poetry, I will confess that the awful grandeur of those snow-clad mountains did not touch my heart so deeply as our beechen glades and primrose-carpeted bottoms close at home."

There was a burst of applause after Rorie's speech that made all the orchids shiver, and nearly annihilated a thirty-guinea *Odontoglossum Vexillarium*. His talk about the forest, irrelevant as it might be, went home to the hearts of the neighbouring landowners. But, by-and-by, in the drawing-room, when he rejoined his cousin, he found that fastidious young lady by no means complimentary.

"Your speech would have been capital half a century ago, Rorie," she said, "and you don't arra—arra—as poor papa does, which is something to be thankful for; but all that talk about the forest seemed to me an anachronism. People are not

rooted in their native soil nowadays, as they used to be in the old stage-coach times, when it was a long day's journey to London. One might as well be a vegetable at once if one is to be pinned down to one particular spot of earth. Why, the Twelve Apostles," exclaimed Mabel, innocent of irreverence, for she meant certain ancient oaks so named, "see as much of life as your fine old English gentleman. Men have wider ideas nowadays. The world is hardly big enough for ambition."

"I would rather live in a field, and strike my roots deep down like one of those trees, than be a homeless nomad with a world-wide ambition," answered Rorie. "I have a passion for home."

"Then I wonder you spend so little time in it."

"Oh, I don't mean a home inside four walls. The forest is my home, and Briarwood is no dearer to me than any other spot in it."

"Not so dear as the Abbey House, perhaps?"

"Well, no. I confess that fine old Tudor mansion pleases me better than this abode of straight lines and French windows, plate-glass and gilt mouldings."

They sat side by side upon the amber ottoman, Rorie with Mabel's blue feather fan in his hand, twirling and twisting it as he talked, and doing more damage to that elegant article in a quarter of an hour than a twelvemonth's legitimate usage would have done. People looking at the pretty pair, smiled significantly, and concluded that it would be a match, and went home and told less privileged people about the evident attachment between the duke's daughter and the young commoner. But Rorie was not strongly drawn towards his cousin this evening. It seemed to him that she was growing more and more of a paragon, and he hated paragons.

She played presently, and afterwards sang some French chansons. Both playing and singing were perfect of their kind. Rorie did not understand Chopin, and thought there was a good deal of unnecessary hopping about the piano in that sort of thing—nothing concrete, or that came to a focus; a succession of airy meanderings, a fairy dance in the treble, a goblin hunt in the bass. But the French chansons, the dainty little melodies with words of infantine innocence, all about leaves and buds, and birds'-nests and butterflies, pleased him infinitely. He hung over the

piano with an enraptured air; and again his friends made note of his subjugation, and registered the fact for future discussion.

CHAPTER V. HOW SHE TOOK THE NEWS.

It was past midnight when the Tempest carriage drove through the dark rhododendron shrubberies up to the old Tudor porch. There was a great pile of logs burning in the hall, giving the home-comers cheery welcome. There was an antique silverspirit-stand, with its accompaniments, on one little table for the squire, and there was another little table on the opposite side of the hearth for Mrs. Tempest, with a dainty tea-service sparkling and shining in the red glow.

A glance at these arrangements would have told you that there were old servants at the Abbey House, servants who knew their master's and mistress's ways, and for whom service was more or less a labour of love.

"How nice!" said the lady, with a contented sigh. "Pauline has thought of my cup of tea."

"And Forbes has not forgotten my soda-water," remarked the squire.

He said nothing about the brandy, which he was pouring into the tall glass with a liberal hand.

Pauline came to take off her mistress's cloak, and was praised for her thoughtfulness about the tea, and then dismissed for the night.

The squire liked to stretch his legs before his own fireside after dining out; and with the squire, as with Mr. Squeers, the leg-stretching process involved the leisurely consumption of a good deal of brandy and water.

Mr. and Mrs. Tempest talked over the Briarwood dinner-party, and arrived—with perfect good-nature—at the conclusion that it had been a failure.

"The dinner was excellent," said the squire, "but the wine went round too slow; my glasses were empty half the time. That's always the way where you've a woman at the helm. She won't put out enough wine, and she won't trust her servants with the keys of her cellar."

"The dresses were lovely," said Mrs. Tempest, "but everyone looked bored. How did you like my dress, Edward? I think it's rather good style. Theodore will charge me horribly for it, I daresay."

"I don't know much about your dress, Pam, but you were the prettiest woman in the room."

"Oh Edward, at my age!" exclaimed Mrs. Tempest, with a pleased look, "when there was that lovely Lady Mabel Ashbourne."

"Do you call her lovely?—I don't. Lips too thin; waist too slim; too much blood, and too little bone."

"Oh, but surely, Edward, she is grace itself; quite an ethereal creature. If Violet had more of that refined air——"

"Heaven forbid! Vixen is worth twenty such fine-drawn misses. Lady Mabel has been spoiled by over-training."

"Roderick is evidently in love with her," suggested Mrs. Tempest, pouring out another cup of tea.

The clocks had just struck two, the household was at rest, the logs blazed and cracked merrily, the red light shining on those mail-clad effigies in the corners, lighting up helm and hauberk, glancing on greaves and gauntlets. It was an hour of repose and gossip which the squire dearly loved.

Hush! what is this creeping softly down the old oak staircase? A slender white figure with cloudy hair; a small pale face, and two dark eyes shining with excitement; little feet in black velvet slippers, tripping lightly upon the polished oak.

Is it a ghost? No; ghosts are noiseless, and those little slippers descend from stair to stair with a gentle pit-a-pit.

"Bless my soul and body!" cried the squire, "what's this?"

A gush of girlish laughter was his only answer.

"Vixen!"

"Did you take me for a ghost, papa?" cried Violet, descending the last five stairs with a flying leap, and then bounding across the hall, to perch, light as a bird, upon her father's knee. "Did I really frighten you? Did you think the good old Abbey House was going to set up a family ghost; a white lady, with a dismal history of a broken heart? You darling papa! I hope you took me for a ghost!"

"Well, upon my word, you know, Vixen, I was just the least bit staggered. Your little white figure looked like something uncanny against the black oak balustrades, half in light, half in shadow."

"How nice!" exclaimed Violet.

"But, my dear Violet, what can have induced you to come downstairs at such an hour?" said Mrs. Tempest, in an aggrieved voice.

"I want to hear all about the party, mamma," answered Vixen coaxingly. "Do

you think I could sleep a wink on the night of Rorie's coming of age? I heard the joy-bells ringing in my ears all night."

"That was very ridiculous," said Mrs. Tempest, "for there were no joy-bells after eleven o'clock yesterday."

"But they rang all the same, mamma. It was no use burying my head in the pillows; those bells only rang the louder. Ding-dong, ding-dong, dell, Rorie's come of age; ding-dong, dell, Rorie's twenty-one. Then I thought of the speeches that would be made, and I fancied I could hear Rorie speaking. Did he make a good speech, papa?"

"Capital, Vix; the only one that was worth hearing."

"I am so glad! And did he look handsome while he was speaking? I think the Swiss sunshine has rather over-cooked him, you know; but he is not unbecomingly brown."

"He looked as handsome a young fellow as you need wish to set eyes on."

"My dear Edward," remonstrated Mrs. Tempest, languidly, "do you think it is quite wise of you to encourage Violet in that kind of talk?"

"Why should she not talk of him? She never had a brother, and he stands in the place of one to her. Isn't Rorie the same to you as an elder brother, Vix?"

The girl's head was on her father's shoulder, one slim arm round his neck, her face hidden against the squire's coat-collar. He could not see the deep warm blush that dyed his daughter's cheek at this home question.

"I don't quite know what an elder brother would be like, papa. But I'm very fond of Rorie—when he's nice, and comes to see us before anyone else, as he did to-day."

"And when he stays away?"

"Oh, then I hate him awfully," exclaimed Vixen, with such energy that the slender figure trembled faintly as she spoke. "But tell me all about the party, mamma. Your dress was quite the prettiest, I am sure?"

"I'm not certain of that, Violet," answered Mrs. Tempest with grave deliberation, as if the question were far too serious to be answered lightly. "There was a cream-coloured silk, with silver bullion fringe, that was very striking. As a rule, I detest gold or silver trimmings; but this was really elegant. It had an effect like moonlight."

"Was that Lady Mabel Ashbourne's dress?" asked Vixen, eagerly.

"No; Lady Mabel wore blue gauze—the very palest blue, all puffings and ruchings—like a cloud."

"Oh mamma! the clouds have no puffings and ruchings."

"My dear, I mean the general effect—a sort of shadowiness, which suits Lady Mabel's ethereal style."

"Ethereal!" repeated Violet thoughtfully; "you seem to admire her very much, mamma."

"Everybody admires her, my dear."

"Because she is a duke's only daughter."

"No; because she is very lovely, and extremely elegant, and most accomplished. She played and sang beautifully to-night."

"What did she play, mamma?"

"Chopin!"

"Did she!" cried Vixen. "Then I pity her. Yes, even if she were my worst enemy I should still pity her."

"People who are fond of music don't mind difficulties," said Mrs. Tempest.

"Don't they? Then I suppose I'm not fond of it, because I shirk my practice. But I should be very fond of music if I could grind it on a barrel-organ."

"Oh Violet, when will you be like Lady Mabel Ashbourne?"

"Never, I devoutly hope," said the squire.

Here the squire gave his daughter a hug which might mean anything.

"Never, mamma," answered Violet with conviction. "First and foremost, I never can be lovely, because I have red hair and a wide mouth. Secondly, I can never be elegant—much less ethereal—because it isn't in me. Thirdly, I shall never be accomplished, for poor Miss McCroke is always giving me up as the baddest lot in the way of pupils that ever came in her way."

"If you persist in talking in that horrible way, Violet——"

"Let her talk as she likes, Pam," said the fond father. "I won't have her bitted too heavily."

Mrs. Tempest gave her gentle sigh of resignation. The squire was all that is dear and good as husband and father, but refinement was out of his line.

"Do go on about the party, mamma. Did Rorie seem to enjoy himself very much?"

"I think so. He was very devoted to his cousin all the evening. I believe they are engaged to be married."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Vixen, starting up from her reclining attitude upon her father's shoulder, and looking intently at the speaker; "Rorie engaged to Lady Mabel Ashbourne!"

"So I am told," replied Mrs. Tempest. "It will be a splendid match for him."

The pretty chestnut head dropped back into its old place upon the squire's shoulder, and Violet answered never a word.

"Past two o'clock," cried her mother. "This is really too dreadful. Come, Violet, you and I must go upstairs at any rate."

"We'll all go," said the squire, finishing his second brandy-and-soda.

So they all three went upstairs together. Vixen had grown suddenly silent and sleepy. She yawned dolefully, and kissed her mother and father at the end of the gallery, without a word; and then scudded off, swift as a scared rabbit, to her own room.

"God bless her!" exclaimed the squire; "she grows prettier and more winning every day."

"If her mouth were only a little smaller," sighed Mrs. Tempest.

"It's the prettiest mouth I ever saw upon woman—bar one," said the squire.

What was Vixen doing while the fond father was praising her?

She had locked her door, and thrown herself face downwards on the carpet, and was sobbing as if her heart would break.

Rorie was going to be married. Her little kingdom had been overturned by a revolution, her little world had crumbled all to pieces. Till to-night she had been a queen in her own mind, and her kingdom had been Rorie, her subjects had begun woman—bar one," said the squire.

Had she ever thought that a time might come when he would be something more to her than playfellow and friend? No, never. The young bright mind was too childishly simple for any such foresight or calculation. She had only thought that he was in somewise her property, and would be so till the end of both their lives. He was hers, and he was very fond of her, and she thought him a rather absurd young fellow, and looked down upon him from the altitude of her childish womanliness.

And now he was gone. The earth had opened all at once and swallowed him, like that prophetic gentleman in the Greek play whose name she could never remember—chariot and horses and all. He belonged henceforth to Lady Mabel Ashbourne. She could never be rude to him any more. She could not take such a liberty with another young lady's lover. "And to think that he should never have told me he was going to be engaged to her," she said. "He must have been fond of her from the very beginning; and he never said a word; and he let me think he rather liked me—or at least tolerated me. And how could he like two people who are the very antipodes of each other? If he is fond of her he must detest me. If he respects her he must despise me."

The thought of such treachery rankled deep in the young warm heart. Vixen started up to her feet, and stood in the midst of the firelit room, with clenched fists, like a young fury. The light chestnut tresses should have been Medusa's snakes to have harmonised with that set white face. God had given Violet Tempest a heart to feel deeply, too deeply for perfect peace, or that angelic softness which seems to us most worthy in woman—the power to suffer and be patient.

METROPOLITAN GIPSYRIES.

MR. GEORGE BORROW, an expert in many languages little known to the world generally, and a writer of much originality and graphic power, has told us more about that strange people the Gipsies than any other of our authors, and has familiarised readers with a vocabulary supposed to have had its root in the venerable Sanscrit of India, modified but not hidden by the introduction of other words from various nations. Into the history, tongue, vagabond habits, occupations, manners and customs of these people, we do not propose to enter here; but there is available a remarkable testimony to the existence of gipsydom in our very midst, in the greatest city of the busiest country in the world. Mr. Borrow's *Lalo-Lal*, or *English Gipsy Language*, as part of an interesting budget of information, gives us an account of two metropolitan gipsyries—spots where gipsies have pitched their camp.

There is a reason why we shall refrain from naming the exact locality of these

encampments. Vacant pieces of ground, in the immediate vicinity of the great metropolis, are becoming rapidly built upon; city men's villas, and rows of neat workmen's houses, spring up on all sides; the gipsey receives a hint that he must move off, and promptly acts upon the hint. The present dwellers in the newly-built residences do not like to hear their district spoken of as a haunt for gipsies, and this feeling is deserving of some consideration. Suffice it to say that one gipsyry is in the south-west suburbs, the other in the north-west—both being gradually encroached upon by railways, new roads, and clusters of new dwellings. We will adopt Mr. Borrow's form, and speak of each gipsyry in the present tense, without noticing in detail the changes which every year—nay, every month—is bringing about.

The south-western gipsyry, about a quarter of a mile from the Thames, is spread over a piece of open ground two acres or so in extent. It is nearly deserted in summer and autumn: the gipsies at those seasons migrating to races, fairs, sea-side resorts, and other places where a little money can be made by donkey-riding, fortune-telling, and "three throws a penny," or else hop-picking in Kent. As winter comes on, the dark-visaged tribe return to the gipsyry, and take up their abode in tents and caravans—chiefly the former. The men chiefly employ themselves during the day in "chinning the cost," that is, making skewers for butchers' use; also in making clothes' pegs, in basket-making, and tinkering old kettles and saucepans. The women stroll about various parts of the metropolis and the suburbs, telling fortunes to silly servant-girls, and other silly people who are not servants, and occasionally perpetrating little cheateries which, if found out, call for the intervention of the police magistrate. The children play about, and beg halfpence from passers-by.

The tents are oblong and simple. Rods are stuck in the ground, and bent over to form a sort of waggon-shaped roof, tied together by strings, and covered with coarse brown cloths pinned or skewered together, and pegged to the ground. A narrow trench is cut around to prevent rain-water from flowing into the tent. The tent differs little from an Indian wigwam, except in being covered with cloth instead of bark. Sitting cross-legged is the order of the day, there being neither chairs nor stools; and as

tables are as scarce as chairs, the meals are spread on the ground, perhaps with a cloth for a little approach to tidiness. Pots, pans, platters, and trenchers are pretty abundant; knives and horn spoons are used, but seldom a fork. A kind of brazier forms the fireplace, with a crook and a kettle for cooking. A pail and a water-cask, a box or two for clothes, and blankets to serve as bedding and bed-clothes, nearly fill up the list of goods and chattels.

The caravans—keri-vardo, or waggon-houses—are on four wheels, drawn each by one horse or two donkeys. The general dimensions may be taken at about twelve feet by six, and six feet high above the floor or platform. There are two sleeping berths at the farther end, one above the other, as on shipboard, with a curtain running on rod-rings as a screen. A small glazed window on each side admits daylight. A stove is placed just within the door, the smoke from which is carried off by a metal chimney or pipe through the roof of the domicile. Some of these caravans manifest a slight attempt at smartness in the interior; but for the most part they are dirty and squalid.

In a sketch of the average daily life of the tribe in this gipsyry, we are told that the people take two meals a day: a breakfast of tea, bread, butter, and cheese; and a supper of tea, with some kind of stew. A mid-day meal is a more uncertain and outdoor affair. On some occasions, for lack of better, a tea or soup is made from the tender leaves of a kind of nettle—called by the sonorous name of dandic mengreskie zimmen, "broth from the stinging things."

These gipsies are of various tribes, of sub-tribes, of which three are called in their own language Purrans, Chumomescroes, and Vardomescroes; Lee, Boswell, and Cooper, well-known surnames, are the English equivalents for these oddly-sounding tribal names. The men are well-made and active, somewhat below the middle height, with dark complexions, bright eyes, and garments not remarkable for soundness or cleanliness. The women are wild-looking, often handsome, and have expressive eyes—expressive of mischief not unfrequently.

Mr. Borrow conversed with one old woman in the encampment, who occupied a tent by herself. On talking to her in Romany or Rommany—the gipsy name for their language—he found that she was, or had been, the wife of Jack Cooper, a

noted gipsy pugilist, whose fist was the terror of all except the most resolute prize-fighters; he quitted his wife, took up with a Jezebel, got into trouble, emigrated to Australia, and taught the gold-diggers the noble art of blackening eyes and bruising noses. Another speciality in the camp was a small neat caravan, belonging to a lone woman of a very different character. She was considerably above the middle height, powerfully but gracefully made, and about thirty-seven years of age; her face oval, and of a dark olive hue; nose Grecian; cheek-bone rather high; eyes somewhat sunken, but of a lustrous black; mouth small, and teeth white as ivory. "Upon the whole, her face is exceedingly beautiful; but the expression is evil—evil to a degree. Who she is no one exactly knows, nor what is her name, nor whether she is a single woman, wife, or widow." Some believed her to be a foreign gipsy; some Scotch, from the Yetholm district; but Mr. Borrow pronounced her accent to be genuine English. "What strikes one as most singular is the power she possesses of appearing in various characters—all Romany ones, it is true—but so different as seemingly to require three distinct females of the race to enact them. Sometimes she is the staid, quiet, respectable gipsy; sometimes the forward and impudent; sometimes the awful and sublime." At Fairlop Fair, as it was previous to recent changes, she would appear in a red cloak and a large beaver hat, telling fortunes to the rough and the ignorant, and showing a fearful power of voluble scurrility to any and all who attempted practical jokes with her; while at Goodwood Races she would appear in a beautiful half-riding dress, her hair fantastically plaited and adorned with mock pearls, and her voice, in insinuating tones, telling fortunes to countesses. Mr. Borrow talked to her, but failed to make her out, and dismisses her as "a dark, mysterious, beautiful, and terrible creature."

Besides the true gipsies, the encampment affords a home for other vagrant people on whom the rent-collector never calls. One set Mr. Borrow believes to be the descendants of rogues and outcasts who roamed about England even before the gipsies were known in the land; in many cases ferocious, depraved, and repulsive, with coarse vulgar features, and complexions (when visible underneath a layer of dirt and grease) of a Saxon and not a southern hue. They talk frowsy

English, cant or slang, and a little Romany. Their tents and caravans are worse than those of the gipsies, and much dirtier. The men employ themselves in tinkering and small rough metal-work, rather than in the woodwork of the gipsies; while the women tramp about, sell trifles which the men have made, and engage in petty transactions of doubtful honesty. The real gipsies hold these people in contempt, calling them choredoes, or chorodies—"poor miserable creatures." Mr. Borrow mentions, as a fact worthy of attention, that words almost identical with these in sound and meaning are met with both in the Sanscrit and the Hebrew languages.

Another group of temporary dwellers at this singular spot are the house-on-wheels people, the itinerant shopkeepers whose shop consists of a caravan almost hidden on the exterior by an array of rush-chairs, mats, rugs, mops, brooms, brushes, pots, pans, kettles, and other household utensils. The group is a little better than the one just noticed, but coarse and low. The real gipsies call them koramengre—"fellows who cry out"—in allusion to their shouting or announcing the wares they have to sell. There is a Hebrew word nearly like this in sound and meaning.

One more body of sojourners, Irish by nationality, are held in great contempt by the gipsies; a contempt, however, which appears to be reciprocated. The designation applied to them, hindity-mengre—"dirty people," is certainly not complimentary. The men employ themselves in tinkering; they are also expert in making, out of old brass buttons, the showy rings used by ring-droppers. The women are cunning practisers of the ring-dropping cheat, and also dispose of the rings—warranted, of course, to be pure gold—to credulous servant-girls and credulous people generally. Mr. Borrow describes a hardy old tramp of this fraternity who learned his letters from a hedge-schoolmaster in the county of Kerry, fought as a soldier in the Peninsular War, roamed about Ireland as a travelling tinker, came to England, learned to fabricate small cheap articles of metal-work at Birmingham, trudged about from county to county selling his petty metal wares and trinkets, and at length came to the encampment of wanderers as a nearly worn-out veteran.

The other gipsyry, which we have said is in the north-west suburbs of the metro-

polis, is much farther from the Thames, and comparatively a short distance from a very well-to-do and fashionable locality. Many low, uncouth-looking sheds are hereabouts, full of coarse chimney-pots, flower-pots, pantiles, and other articles made of coarse clay. At one spot is a bit of ground free from permanent buildings of any kind, but occupied with crazy old caravans. "Dark men, witch-like women, and yellow-faced children are at the doors of the caravans, or wending their way through the narrow spaces left for transit between the vehicles."

The gipsies have not failed to devise an expressive name for this spot, Koromengreskoe—"the place of the fellows who make pots." On each and every side "it is a neighbourhood of transition, of brick-fields, open spaces, poor streets inhabited by low-grade artisans, isolated houses, sites of intended tenements, or sites of tenements which have been pulled down. It is, in fact, a mere chaos, where there is no order and no regularity, where there is nothing durable or intended to be durable; though there can be little doubt that within a few years order and beauty itself will be found here—that the misery, squalidness, and meanness will have disappeared." At present, however, it is quite the kind of place to please the gipsies and wandering people, who find many spots within its bounds where they can squat and settle, or take up their quarters for a night or two, without much risk of being interfered with. Here their tents, cars, and caravans may be seen amidst ruins, half-raised walls, and patches of unenclosed ground. Some of the men are horse-dealers, not wholly unacquainted with the cheateries which so much disfigure the lower grades of that occupation.

These gipsies will pass away as the house-speculator and the builder invade the localities; but the gipsies and wanderers have probably got an eye to other spots when the necessity for removal arrives.

We may remark, in reference to the expressive names used by these remarkable people—names in many instances traceable to very ancient languages—that the English towns and counties are known to them, when speaking among themselves, by designations having quite an outlandish look, but denoting something or other characteristic of the several localities. Many of the names are rather long, though few equalling in length Bitcheno-padlen-greskey tem, "transported fellows' country,"

meaning Botany Bay—as it was, not as it is. Mr. Borrow gives the Romany names which denote that Hampshire is "the swineherd's country;" Sussex, "the shepherd's country;" Northumberland, "the big fellows' country;" Staffordshire, "the potmakers' country;" Yorkshire, "the pudding-eaters' country;" Ireland, "the dirty fellows' country;" York, "the great church town;" Northampton, "the shoemakers' town;" Dudley, "the dog-fanciers' town;" Horncastle, "the horsedealers' town;" and so on.

The peculiar relation which gipsies bear to society in general, and to the advancing phases of civilisation, has been well set forth by the erudite author of an article in *The Quarterly Review* (July, 1878, No. 309), On the Origin and Wanderings of the Gipsies. He first treats of the cumulative evidence in support of an opinion now widely held by an increasing number of learned investigators, that the gipsies were originally the Jâts of the Indus Valley—a tribe which to this day stands out apart from the Hindoos near them in striking peculiarities; not the least of which is the absence of all religion: Buddha, Brahma, and Mahomet being alike ignored by them. Another point is that the Jâts, like the gipsies, are addicted to fortune-telling, trickeries, and horse-dealing. The Jâts were so sorely oppressed by the Moslem conquerors of India, that a horde of them is supposed to have migrated westward somewhere about 1000 A.D. They passed through Beloochistan and Persia into Asia Minor, and in later centuries wended their way into Europe, grouped into comparatively small communities at a time. Speaking of the gipsy habits of life, the reviewer says: "Amongst ourselves, their worst enemies have been railway companies, Enclosure Acts, and rural police. In the presence of these unrelenting agents of what a French author has called our libticide civilisation, the tongue of the Romany people becomes a half-remembered jargon. But these irrepressible people die out in one direction only to emerge with renewed vitality in another gipsy encampment." The two metropolitan gipsyries we have described will disappear, but others will spring up without doubt.

THEN AND NOW.

In that sweet olden time of May,
When all the chestnuts were in bloom,
O'ershadowed was with tender gloom
The silence of the long brown way.

Beyond the shadowed moss-grown wall
The laughing meadows lay in light,
Half golden-green, half drifts of white,
Around the feet of oak-trees tall.

A pallid moon from out the blue
Was hanging, leaned above the trees,
Far-gazing over distant seas,
Yearning to lovelier worlds she knew.

Most sweetly tuned the hidden thrush;
The corn-crake from the hollow near
Kept saying loudly, "Summer's here!"
Across the dream-like noon-tide hush.

Then your glad spirit spoke to mine,
"The summer's here, and love is ours;
So crown, oh love, my soul with flowers,
And straitly bind my life to thine!"

With roses thrice I bound thy hands,
Low laughing in the shadows warm;
God keep our love from blight and harm,
We wander now in separate lands!

Deep shadows gloom the long brown way,
The thrush sings low from out the green;
The summer is less sweet I ween,
Than it was in that olden May!

PERSONALLY CONDUCTED.

XII. AND LAST.

"DOLLY!" says Nellie Rivers, as, after a good rest and a refreshing "toilette," we follow the smiling chambermaid to our neat little salon overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens, "isn't it nice to be 'somebody' again?"

And certainly, after having for the last three weeks forfeited one's individuality almost as completely as a Number Ninety-nine working in his gang at Portland or Dartmoor, it is pleasant to resume one's independent existence, and feel oneself once again something more than one of the exceedingly insignificant ciphers which go to make up a "parti de Gawks." The mere substitution of the deferential announcement that breakfast attends us if we are ready, for the accustomed "You shall get kein brakefass, you know, venn you shall not be quick," gives one at first quite a novel sense of dignity. Thanks to Mr. Neville's generalship too, we are not in the least tired with our long night-journey, during the greater part of which we have slept almost as comfortably as if we had been in bed. So we begin to look at life from quite a different point of view, and prepare to enjoy our two or three days in Paris in quite another fashion.

Here on the "rive gauche" too, the influence of that terrible Exhibition, which has had such a disastrous effect upon hotel prices on the opposite side of the river, has, as yet, hardly made itself felt. Our comfortable little suite au premier, with their beautifully-waxed floors, their clean white lace curtains, their bright mirrors, their gay little

strips of soft carpet here and there, and their pleasant outlook over the sunny gardens, cost, private salon and all, considerably less than our stuffy little attics, mountain-high, in the noisy street by the Western Station. As for other expenses, we can either take our "nourishment" in the *salle-à-manger* downstairs; or we may, with equal goodwill on the part of monsieur the proprietor, sally forth to any one of the neighbouring restaurants to which, if we please, we can "abonner" ourselves at a cost of say twenty odd francs for a dozen or so of dinners, wine included.

For this first breakfast, however, at all events, we mean to trust ourselves to the resources of the hotel, and a very pretty little breakfast they send us up. I am a little astonished, however, to find that only three places have been laid, till Mrs. Crumpelhorne makes her appearance, and with one of her funny smiles explains that Mr. Neville has found awaiting him a telegram, requiring his immediate presence in Downing Street, and that he has gone straight on by the tidal train. Mrs. Crumpelhorne says laughingly, she hopes he will have a pleasant voyage across the Channel, and I am sure I hope he will. But the weather here seems somehow to have clouded over, and it does not seem likely to be by any means so bright a day as the first look-out over the gardens promised. However, we must make the most of it, dull or fine, and though I begin to feel that I am more tired than I thought I was, and to fancy that the Exhibition will, after all, be rather a dull business, I don't like to say so, especially as neither Nellie nor even Mrs. Crumpelhorne appear to have suffered in the least. Indeed, I don't think I ever heard Miss Nellie chatter so fast as she does all breakfast-time, and the old lady is just as frisky as herself, and laughs till the tears run down her cheeks, when to some sudden question I return a perfectly irrelevant answer, and stand confessed—wool-gathering.

Then, as we leave the room to get ready for an expedition, the good lady draws me back a little, and, fumbling for a few moments in her pocket, produces a little parcel, neatly folded in superfine writing-paper, and sealed with a great oval signet, which somehow I seem to have seen before.

"My dear," she says, with her most serio-comic aspect, "a certain young gentleman, who was obliged to go off in a great hurry, and couldn't disturb you at your toilet, made me promise very solemnly to

hand you this. Perhaps you had better give me a receipt."

And with that she places the little parcel in my astonished hands, and taking her "receipt" in the form of a kiss, bustles off to her room, leaving me to make the best of my way to mine, with the mysterious parcel in my hand. Another minute and the paper wrapper is removed, and a little morocco-case makes its appearance, with the single word "Giessbach" stamped on it in small gold letters, and a date. Another, and with a breathless little gasp I have pressed the spring, and there, on the soft white velvet cushion inside, lies—a little cross of dark crystal, mounted in gold.

Certainly I am one of the worst travellers that ever was. I have no idea how we made our way from the Luxembourg to the Exhibition. Nellie vows that, being deputed, on account of my superior linguistic attainments, to arrange matters with the cocher, I bewilder that unfortunate Jehu by bidding him drive us first to Giessbach and then to Boulogne. But that I don't believe. All I know is, that in course of time I find myself passing a turnstile, where a polite official relieves me of a ticket, which, by some occult process, has got itself between my fingers, and strolling, with Mrs. Crumpelhorne and Nellie, along a sunny terrace, beneath which flows what, if it be any river at all out of actual Dreamland, must of course be the Seine. Before me is a long tank, in which are swimming sorrowfully about some half-dozen or so of turtles. Beyond is a long panelled wall, bearing a legend, each word of which, if words they be, occupies a panel itself, and which runs thus:

Ex posit ionos treic dedu Morbi hau.

I am speculating dreamily as to what language this may be, when I am aroused by a sudden rush of many feet, and an energetic voice, which I have surely heard before, approaches rapidly with the announcement that—

"Zis, ladies and gentlemen, is ze Ostreic Exposition of Morbihan, where ze leetel eyestares go to school. I am not a good mattematizian, and cannot tell you how many million bébé eyestares zere shall be learning to get fat all at von time. Bot you shall take more interest in zem ven zey shall be grown op; so we shall not vaste no more time upon zem zis morning."

It is Figaro himself—our never-to-be-forgotten cicerone of Versailles! At his

heels is a hurrying crowd, perhaps about a hundred and fifty strong, intent not merely upon "doing" the Exhibition in the half-day that has been set apart in their itinerary, but in doing it thoroughly, from the great towers of the Trocadero to the gilt dome of the Invalides. How many score miles they have walked or run already, it would be difficult, I fancy, even for themselves to say; though the pace is clearly beginning to tell upon some of them, and even as they pass, one old lady absolutely "tails off," and, sinking breathless on a bench, gives herself up in calm despair to the solace of a mighty cotton pocket-handkerchief. But Figaro himself has not turned a hair. As for stopping, that, of course, is out of the question. His little joke about the oysters has already carried him well past the "Exposition Ostreic," and is followed, without even the intervention of a comma, by a no doubt equally instructive comment upon the next feature of his route. The affair is too serious, and the pace too good, for even the laugh that in our quieter progress always followed each little sally of the kind. Only one voice, which, oddly enough, seems even more familiar than his own, responds from the thickest of the throng with a cheery "All right, guv'ner; drive on. Joseph's after yer!" And as the hundred and forty-nine or so whose strength still holds out scuffle past, I catch a glimpse of a well-known suit of "dittoes," and am glad to think that Checksuit has, at all events, escaped the clutches of the outraged authorities of the "P.L.M."

Then we ourselves follow a little more leisurely. Gradually the cloud of dust, with which the rapid passage of Figaro and his followers has at first enveloped everything, clears away, and we can see about us. It thickens again a little as we pass the two great cafés whose presence announces our approach to the grand entrance from the Trocadero on the other side of the water, and where a passing dash has evidently been made upon the liquid refreshments; but long before we reach the broad open garden which fronts the great main buildings of the Champ de Mars they have passed out of sight and sound. The only vestige of them is an old gentleman, in a straw hat of portentous dimensions, and a puggaree the weight of which alone must have seriously handicapped his exertions. I noticed him at the gates struggling

bravely on, the very last of the party. And now he too has given it up, and, hat in hand, is swallowing glass after glass of Normandy cider, with a perseverance which wreathes the buxom countenance of the gaily-costumed lady of the counter in approving smiles.

Shall I give an elaborate description of that prodigious bazaar into which we at last find our way just as another "party" of some two hundred or more of our fellow-countrymen come rushing past, under the guidance of a long, lean, melancholy man, the very antipodes of our old friend Figaro? I think not. Even were I to confine myself to what I myself see and hear—which would be, as it were, a parish clerk's contribution to the History of England—I am afraid I should require a good deal more space than any editor could allow. I might manage it, perhaps, were I to adopt the method of this new specimen of the genus guide. He is quite as laconic as Figaro was voluble. As the last files of his panting party crush through the door, he turns for a moment on his heel, holds up a big bony hand to enforce silence, and towering over them from the lanky eminence of his six feet six inches, or thereabouts, shouts, in stentorian tones: "Great 'All!" Then, with a rapid jerk of the bony hand, he continues rapidly: "Hinglish Department—Fine Harts—Furria. Hinglish fust." And, without more ado, steams away, at the full stretch of his preposterous legs, leaving his flock to follow as they may. As he passes the great glass cases in the centre of the hall close by, he turns momentarily once more, and I see the jerk of the bony thumb and hear the one word, "Di-'monds." A little farther on he turns again, and again the thumb performs its little pantomime over the heads of the crowd. But the explanatory shout is no longer intelligible in the general buzz and murmur, and so I watch him alternately shooting ahead and halting for a momentary right-about-face, till he finally vanishes round a corner into the Hinglish Department. But I doubt if this method would be quite so effective on paper.

As for doing our Exhibition too in any sort of order, or with any kind of premeditated plan, we do not attempt anything of the kind.

"My dears," says good old Mrs. Crum-pelhorne, in her own easy-going fashion, "I like to do one thing at a time. As for

improving our minds, I don't think I have quite exhausted the means of doing that at home. So now let us enjoy ourselves."

And so we wander just as fancy leads. First we take a look at a mile or two of pictures, a good many of which I remember in the old days when we all used to go up every year to the Royal Academy, and amuse ourselves by little critical comparisons, no doubt of a highly-original description, between the various Schools. It is a little startling, for instance, after one's previous ideas of the home of the arts, to find what a very poor show Italy makes. Russia, on the other hand, if one had formed any previous ideas upon the subject—which I, at all events, certainly had not—would, I think, be very much what one would have anticipated. Most of the Italian pictures give one the idea of being the work of boys, and very noisy idle boys, who would be much the better, metaphorically, at all events, of a good whipping. The Russian pictures, on the contrary, are very distinctively the work of stern, silent, brooding men, who have been whipped—metaphorically also, of course—rather too much. One seems to hear everywhere the crack of the Cossack whip, and it is quite a relief to get among the homely, friendly little bits from Denmark, or even the colder and stiffer canvases from Sweden and Norway.

Then, somehow, we find ourselves caught in a little back-eddy of eager sightseers, and carried through terribly tight-fitting doors and cruelly-constricted little passages, that open out every here and there, into droll little dark interiors—Dutch, Swedish, Belgian, and the rest—each inhabited by its own little group of somewhat erie-looking dolls, large as life, and looking grievously as though they had been shot and stuffed like other "specimens" at South Kensington or the British Museum. Figaro and his party have, apparently, not long since passed by this way; for two tearful women start suddenly from a sequestered corner, and lay imploring hands upon either sleeve of too-obviously good-natured Mrs. Crum-pelhorne, with a despairing demand if we have seen "their party." Such a nice young gentleman there was with it, in a check coat. And he'd bin a-explaining of everythink so haffable-like; and he'd told them to wait there just 'arf a minnit while he ran round to find the man to wind the figures up and set 'em going; and—

And then a stentorian voice at the door proclaims: "Dutch interior; man, woman,

and h'infant," and a tall gaunt figure dashes past, and in a moment we are swept away to emerge at last, bruised, breathless, and bewildered, into another huge hall at the Invalides end of the building, where bells are ringing and tin trumpets sounding, and half-a-dozen rather powerful organs are performing different airs at the same time, and long counters are laid out as promenades for mechanical goats; and tottery lady-dolls, with delicate little figures and gigantic brass boots, toddle backwards and forwards to the inspiring strains.

Hurrying out of this Babel as quickly as possible, we find ourselves in the long open-air alley, one side of which is formed of a long series of wonderful façades, a little too obviously without any substantial *raison d'être*, but representing, if not the actually characteristic architecture of each different country, at all events what an ingenious and patriotic architect might please himself with considering as such. Here we find the sun a trifle oppressive, and stray off again amongst the textile fabrics. Such silks and satins! Such velvets and brocades! Such gorgeous scarves, and matchless mantles, and inconceivable cashmeres! Such softness, and richness, and wealth of colour and sheen. I am afraid we should have stayed here altogether, if Mrs. Crumpelhorne, who, I know, has generally rather a Titianesque taste in colour, had not suddenly become fascinated with a certain case filled with rich silken robes of ivory-white, with wreaths and trimmings of little dead-white blossoms, on which she insists on having our solemn and separate opinions. Nellie and I have fairly to seize her, one by each arm, and carry her forcibly away. And even as she goes she cries remonstratively: "My dears, my dears, you haven't got the address now!"

And then we find ourselves in the furniture department, and passing quickly through the long ranges of "articles de luxe," the wonderful inlaid cabinets, and gorgeous carved four-posters, and curtains and portières of fairy lace or massy velvet, and chairs and sofas and lounges, glorious with elaborate seats and cushions of painted and embroidered satin and all the other contrivances for making life endurable to unfortunate people with more money than they can spend, and emerge at length among the articles à bon marché, where fortunate people, not so troubled, can furnish their modest little apartment at

almost any cost, from ten pounds upward. One article in particular in this department strikes us with a feeling almost approaching to awe. When we first catch sight of it, it is apparently a rather ordinary but extremely solid mahogany chest of drawers. At that very moment a fiercely energetic little man, in a canvas suit and the most stupendous perspiration ever conceived of by the most ardent votary of the Turkish bath, is rapidly pulling out drawer by drawer, to demonstrate clearly that "there is no deception." Suddenly, and without the smallest provocation, it becomes a washhandstand. Next moment, without a pause in which to master the "happy family" sort of arrangement by which clean linen and jugs of water are supposed to live together in peace and harmony, the exhibitor flings himself once more upon it, turns it apparently hind-part before, and upside down and inside out, and lo! it is a bed, with mattress, feather-bed, pillows, blankets, bolsters, all complete! He is dashing frantically at some still more startling transformation, when a familiar voice proclaiming as it rapidly approaches, that "Zis, ladies and jentlemen, is ze famous exhibition of sheep—" is cut ruthlessly short by a yet more familiar voice exclaiming peremptorily, "Oh, sheep be 'anged! Show us the beef and mutton, old fellow. Joseph's little dinner-bell's been goin' this 'arf hour."

The suggestion is greeted with general applause. As we conceal ourselves hastily behind a huge wardrobe, we gather from the observations of the passing party that Checksuit's appetite has been well earned. Around the garden and through the great pavilion of Crusoe, along the great 'all, up through the H'english Section, down by the h'Alley of the 'Ouse-fronts, up again through the Fine H'Arts Galleries to t'other great 'all where the toys are, and now more than 'alfway back again, through furniture and glass and textile fabrics, they must certainly, as Checksuit says, "'ave bin travellin' a good four mile an hour, without stoppin' so much as to sneeze," ever since entering the ground. They have only one more journey to make through the long machinery section in the French or "furrin" side, and the Exhibition will have been "done," and in ample time to do the Invalides and such other "objects of interest" as are comprised in the day's programme. But exercise of this severity cannot be kept up forever without sustenance, and the "dinner-

bells" of the party at large appear quite in time with Checksuit's. So, with an appropriate jest, the best part of which is lost in the anticipatory laughter which greets its commencement, Figaro leads the way in the direction of the desired refreshment, and his flock, now reduced, so far as we can estimate, to about half its original number, follow with a cheerful "Hurrah!"

Then we too meander on, and find ourselves among the machinery, where the whirr and worry of whirling wheels and hurrying leathern bands, the rattle of looms, the scratching of saws, the thumping and bumping and crunching of hammer and punch and stamp and die, combine in an unceasing Babel, which effectually drowns all other sounds, and reduces anything like explanation to "mere inexplicable dumb show and noise." Every machine in the vast building is running at top-speed, and has an anxious air of competition against all the rest, which seems to fatigue you in looking on more than if you were ever so hard at work yourself. Perhaps I am fanciful too, but there is a sort of unreality about the whole thing, which I can't help feeling must somehow be annoying to the machines themselves. A good many of them are doing actual work, no doubt. Here is one, steadily squeezing up little cakes of soap; next to it are two or three diligently mixing chocolate, and packing it away in little boxes of wafers, or sticks, or solid cakes, as the case may be. A little farther on, a wonderful engine is wasting its energies upon the construction of absurd little cylinders of what looks like ground glass, but is really ice; so lightly frozen, however, that one cylinder seems to have melted away almost before another is ready to supply its place. Perhaps if it were working in earnest, and had its heart in its work, the result would be different. This funny little perpendicular saw, for instance, that is whizzing up and down, cutting out little baskets from little solid blocks of wood, seems quite at home and happy, and is chirruping over its work as though it liked being looked at, and might even perhaps begin to sulk a little if it were put away in a mere grimy factory, with nobody but unappreciative mechanics to watch its ingenious operations. The stolid-looking piece of machinery close by, on the other hand, which is, after all, displaying quite as much ingenuity, seems quite devoid of any feeling

of the kind. It deliberately swallows its lumps of wood, and turns them quietly over and over, and round and round, cutting off a little bit here, shaving off a little bit there, scooping out a little bit in another place, and then deliberately dropping it out again, as though to its contented and unaspiring mind the making of sabots were as simple and commonplace a process as the wearing of them. And not far from it a huge machine which for its power might be quarrying mighty blocks of marble, and for its delicate elaborateness might be shaping them into fairy statuettes for the drawing-room mantelpiece, is going disconsolately round and round, and doing absolutely nothing at all, but at every round uttering a loud "Pst! pst!" as though calling impatiently to its absent master to come back and give it something to do.

I could wander about among these captive Samsons all day long. But the noise and the whirr and the general sense of toil and hurry is certainly fatiguing enough, and I do not wonder that poor Mrs. Crumpehorn soon has enough of it, and that she hurries off from the rattle and the racket; and we emerge once more into the silence of the great carriage section, where the long rows of silent empty vehicles, most of them, as it seems to me, lined with black satin, have a calming, but a somewhat grim look. Very luxurious are many of the "exhibits" in this department, and very quaint are others. Some of the French translations of that very English original, the four-in-hand drag, have an intensely comic appearance. But they become oppressive after a time; and we wander away again. And as we emerge, we hear the scuffle of many feet, and the voice of Figaro, proclaiming:

"Zis, jentlemen, is ze exposition of carriages, but zey 'ave no 'orses, as you see, and as you have been so long ovare your lonch, and your ponch, and all ze rest, you shall go through it so quick, as if you had all four 'orses apiece. And so ve shall still 'ave taim for ze Invalides, and——"

And Figaro is already out of hearing, and his diminished following is streaming wildly after him. Not above twenty or thirty of the toughest and hardiest among them have survived to this point the arduous labours of the day. But "ze lonch and ze ponch" have freshened up these faithful few to an astonishing extent,

and no one, shutting his eyes and listening only to the shouts and the laughter, as the clamouring troop scuffles swiftly by, would imagine that its strength had been reduced by so much as a single pair of lungs! But to our astonishment, Checksuit is not among them. Can he really be among the long list of those who have fallen out of the ranks on this terrible march, or have the fascination of "ze lonch and ze ponch" been too much for him? Apparently the latter cause must have had at least something to do with his desertion, for as we at last emerge upon the terrace on our way home, we hear from behind us a loud "Hi! hi!" and there, some fifty yards off, is Checksuit himself, in the very act of pitching headforemost out of a huge wheel-chair, which he has been in too great a hurry to allow time to stop before dismounting. But that does not disconcert Checksuit in the least. By jingo! Joseph wouldn't 'ave missed the chance for anything. Used up all 'is little pocket-'andkerchiefs, Joseph 'as. Began to think he'd got water on the brain, and it was all coming out at his eyes, he did, and—

I am afraid the little monster has got champagne upon the brain, or upon whatever substitute Nature may have supplied him with in its place. As for shaking him off, you might as well try to shake off your skin. So we submit to the inevitable with what grace we may, and hurry across the interminable gardens at top-speed, as regardless of heat and fatigue as of Checksuit's eager entreaties to stop and 'ave at least one bottle of Cham, just to wish a feller good-luck, you know. It is only at the gate that we at last make our escape, and we should not do so even then, but that once out there is no return, and the chairman, who has followed grinning at our heels all across the gardens, puts a peremptory veto upon the exit of his fare, until he shall have been paid. So, amid the approving smiles of the officials at the gate, and of the throng pouring in and out, Checksuit grasps our hands in affectionate farewell, and loudly expresses his earnest 'ope that we shall meet again.

"I say, miss," he says eagerly, as he holds my hand tightly in his great hot paw, "I suppose a feller mightn't look you up when he got 'ome—eh?"

I look at him in blank horror for a moment or two, then hastily swallow the very unvarnished "No" that springs involuntarily to my lips, and stammer out

something about not knowing exactly where I shall be and so forth.

"All right, miss," he says with something between a sigh and a hiccough. "Joseph knows all about it. Wish yer joy all the same!" And before I have time to recover my equanimity after this last astonishing sally, our citadine has driven off. The last glimpse I have of Checksuit he is standing on the seat of his wheel-chair, vigorously waving his handkerchief, and, so far as can be judged by appearances, cheering at the top of his voice.

And so my little holiday-trip comes to an end, and by two o'clock next afternoon we are steaming steadily across the Channel in the Calais-Douvres. And a very different voyage we have from that horrible passage by Dieppe. The day is fine, so there is no obstacle to our enjoyment of the fresh breeze and light sunshine on the broad steady deck. But Mr. Shanks, who is on his way home, like ourselves, and who quite wins my heart by presenting me with a copy of the Daily Pantophone, containing dear old Dick's account of his journey as far as Brindisi, which he agrees with me in considering a model of descriptive eloquence, insists on taking me all over the ship, and showing me how luxurious we should have been even in the worst of weathers. I give a shudder at the bare remembrance of that pestilential little den which was called a cabin on our former voyage, and compare it with the handsome saloon, lofty almost as a drawing-room, and plentifully furnished with handy tables and comfortable easy-chairs, and all round the after-part a long semicircular row of "reserved seats," that can be booked beforehand for a shilling apiece. Then, a little farther forward comes the handsome ladies' saloon, almost as large, and even more cosily furnished. Farther forward again, at the other end of the enormous engine-room, is the richly-decorated refreshment saloon, and beyond this again is the long range of private state-rooms—at all prices, from one pound to five—where, if you have any unpleasant business to transact on your own account, you can, at all events, transact it in peace and privacy. Nobody seems to be transacting any business of that kind to-day however, and the whole four hundred of us scramble on shore at Dover at least as fresh and rosy as when we came on board.

And so we are back at home once more; at least so far as being again in England.

As for getting into quarters of my own, good old Mrs. Crumpelhorne has insisted upon my coming to her for that night at all events. After luncheon to-morrow, she says, with one of her most knowing and most mysterious smiles, I may make up my mind how to manage for the future.

It is not luncheon-time, however, by any means—in fact it is not very long after breakfast—when I am summoned to the drawing-room. Neither is it Mrs. Crumpelhorne whom I find awaiting me. Why I should suddenly feel all the breath going out of my body, and all the blood mounting up into my cheeks, merely with the surprise of finding that the hand which is stretched out to greet me, and the voice which wishes me an, if possible, more than usually quiet “Good morning,” both belong to Mr. Horace Neville, I cannot say. Certainly, it is rather an early hour for a call. But still, you know—

“Dolly!” he says; and I feel the silly flush mounting more quickly than ever; for it is the first time he has ever called me that, in what may be called cold blood, and he keeps fast hold of my hand as he does so. There is ever so faint a suspicion in his voice too, of something not quite like its usual imperturbability, as though some very serious announcement must be coming. But all he says is:

“Pleasant trip?”

I give what I am afraid is rather a foolish little laugh, and reply: “Oh yes, very pleasant.”

“Come to Italy for the winter—Dolly?”

And then I laugh again, I am afraid more foolishly than before, and ask how am I to manage that?

And then—

Well, then Mr. Neville explains how it is to be managed. Which is a matter of detail, and need not in any way be set forth here. But when, apparently about two minutes later, good old Mrs. Crumpelhorne comes in, coughing violently in the draught of the landing, with the astonishing intelligence that luncheon has been quite cold for the last half-hour, there is fortunately not much left to be settled, except, perhaps, the date of starting. What may be Mrs. Crumpelhorne’s views I really do not know; for, with one flying kiss, which, in my haste, falls just upon the tip of her motherly nose, I dash out of the room and upstairs, three steps at a time, to cool my foolish cheeks before anyone else can come down upon me.

It is not a very large party that I am to

go with next time. I don’t much think it will consist of more than two persons. But still I shall certainly be Personally Conducted.

THE OLD FRENCH STAGE.

MADemoiselle DUMESNIL.

SEVEN years after the death of Adrienne Lecouvreur, and a few months subsequent to the retirement of Madame Quinault-Dufresne, a young actress, of whose promising essays at Strasburg and Compiègne favourable accounts had already reached the capital, made her first appearance at the Théâtre Français, August 6, 1737, as Clytemnestre in *Iphigénie en Aulide*. According to most of her biographers, Marie Françoise Dumesnil was a native of Paris, but recent researches seem to indicate that she was born in Normandy, in 1711 or 1712; she must therefore have been at the very least twenty-five years of age at the time of her début, although, availing herself of a custom then universally prevalent, and not altogether obsolete even at the present day, she owned only to twenty-two. The extraordinary success obtained by her in Racine’s tragedy, as well as in *Phèdre* and *Le Comte d’Essex*, is recorded by Boissy in the following lines introduced by him in his comedy *L’Apologie du Siècle*, on the revival of that piece at the Italian theatre, in September of the same year:

Dans son brillant essai qu’applaudit tout Paris,
Le suprême talent se développe en elle,
Et prenant un essor dont les yeux sont surpris,
Elle ne suit personne et promet un modèle.

Seldom, indeed, had a new-comer met with so enthusiastic a reception, and been at once adopted by the public without a dissentient voice. So decisive was her triumph that the usual regulations of the theatre were set aside in her favour, and after a performance of *Phèdre* before the court at Fontainebleau her admission as a member of the society was definitively accorded. Contrary to the general practice, she was spared the long and tedious apprenticeship which the greatest of her contemporaries, Lekain among others, were compelled to undergo. A position, hitherto attainable only as a recompense for past services, was exceptionally secured to her at the outset of her career, and her right to it was amply justified by a popularity which during thirty-nine years experienced neither interruption nor diminution. Since Mdlle. Lecouvreur, no one had produced

so powerful an effect on the audience by the terrible energy of her acting, and it is even doubtful whether in certain characters she did not surpass her celebrated predecessor, especially as Cléopâtre in *Rodogune*. It is related that on one occasion so intense was the horror inspired by her impassioned fury that the occupants of the pit nearest the stage (there were no seats in those days) actually recoiled from her, leaving an empty space between the orchestra and themselves. It was on the same evening that in the scene where, expiring in a convulsion of rage, she uttered the line—

Je maudirais les Dieux, s'ils me rendaient le jour—

an old officer, seated, as was then customary among the privileged spectators, on one side of the stage, unable to contain himself, struck her a sharp blow on the back, exclaiming in a transport of indignation: "*Vas, chienne, à tous les diables!*" At the conclusion of the tragedy the veteran, who had by this time recovered his senses, apologised for the outrage he had committed, and was laughingly assured by the actress that of all the compliments she had received during her life, his was incomparably the most gratifying.

Unlike her illustrious rival Mdlle. Clairon, whose excellence was the result of a rare artistic intelligence combined with unremitting study, Mdlle. Dumesnil depended for her inspiration on nature alone. Endowed with every innate quality essential to the formation of a great actress, she needed no feigned sensibility, no simulated passion; guided by her unerring instinct, and completely identifying herself, to the utter exclusion of her own individuality, with the personage represented by her, she was pathetic or terrible as the situation demanded, but always in earnest, always irresistibly real. She saw at a glance the effect to be produced, and never missed it; a single reading of a part sufficed not only to imprint its leading features on her memory, but also to indicate with infallible accuracy the precise scene or moment, where the talent of the exponent could be most advantageously displayed. On this particular point she concentrated every effort of her genius, and herein lay her principal defect; reserving herself wholly for the outburst of rage or tenderness destined to electrify her hearers, she was too apt to neglect the relatively unimportant passages leading up to it, and to hurry over them with a

volubility occasionally bordering on the ludicrous. These sudden and abrupt transitions from a rapid and monotonous delivery, totally free, however, from the declamatory sing-song adopted by many of her colleagues, to a height of sublimity unequalled perhaps in the annals of French tragedy, were strongly censured by the exclusive admirers of Mdlle. Clairon, as contrasting unfavourably with the minute attention to detail peculiar to the latter; but their criticisms appear to have had little weight with the general public, it being notorious that, notwithstanding this acknowledged imperfection, Mdlle. Dumesnil, during the entire course of their professional rivalry, was unquestionably the more popular of the two.

Dorat, in his poem of *La Déclamation*, thus describes her, and, especially in the concluding line, has seldom been more happily inspired:

*Une actrice parut : Melpomène elle-même
Ceignit son front altier d'un sanglant diadème,
Dumesnil est son nom. L'amour et la fureur,
Toutes les passions fermentent dans son cœur.
Les tyrans à sa voix vont rentrer dans la poudre;
Son geste est un éclair, ses yeux lancent la foudre.*

No more life-like portrait, indeed, could possibly have been traced than this brief but graphic reminiscence, the faithful record of the writer's own impressions while horror-struck by her appalling impetuosity, and quailing beneath her penetrating eye! Such was the Cléopâtre, such the Clytemnestre, in all the majesty of their regal robes, and surrounded by the pomp and glittering paraphernalia of the stage; but what a difference was there between the imposing actress, whose eagle glance and thrilling tones held despotic sway over the spell-bound multitude, and the unambitious bourgeoisie who, her gems and costly trappings temporarily laid aside, returned on foot and unattended to her modest home! Unlike the superb and haughty Clairon, whose queenly magnificence never deserted her for an instant, and who at all times and on all occasions imagined herself prescriptively entitled to the homage of those around her, Mdlle. Dumesnil, once removed from the scene of her triumphs, quietly resumed her simple habits with her everyday attire, and aspired to no further sovereignty. Naturally reserved and averse to unnecessary publicity, she had little temptation to mix in general society; her personal appearance—though not unprepossessing, for her figure was well proportioned, and the expression

of her countenance both intelligent and agreeable—had no pretension to beauty, and was therefore unlikely to attract the notice of the fashionable gallants of the day. The circle of her acquaintance was limited to a few intimates, one of whom, Marquis Lomellini, reminds us of an anecdote related by a contemporary chronicler. She was dining at his house in company with Mdlle. Gaussin and D'Alembert, when the latter, whose talent for imitation was well known, was solicited by the host to give them a specimen of his ability. "Let us see," he said, "if the two ladies present can inspire you." The academician, by no means unwilling to accept the challenge, proceeded to copy the voice and manner of Mdlle. Gaussin so successfully that the party were convulsed with laughter; and then came the turn of Mdlle. Dumesnil. Before he had recited more than three or four lines with appropriate gestures, the actress started from her chair: "There it is," she exclaimed, "my left arm, my unlucky left arm! For the last ten years I have been striving to render it as supple as the other, and I cannot! It will hang stiff like an icicle, and he"—pointing to D'Alembert, and involuntarily assuming her most tragic tone—"he has found it out!"

None appreciated her merit more cordially than Voltaire, although, in order not to excite the jealous susceptibility of Mdlle. Clairon, with whom it was indispensable for him to be on good terms, he sedulously avoided any open manifestation of his preference. His *Mérope* was written expressly for her, and it is recorded that during the first rehearsals she only partially succeeded in satisfying him, her conception of the character appearing to him deficient in energy.

"But, monsieur," she objected, on his urging her to throw more spirit into the part, "one must be *Mérope* herself to please you!" "That is precisely what I wish you to be," coolly replied Voltaire. However, when the decisive night arrived, he had no reason to complain of any tameness on the part of the actress; never had she been more touchingly pathetic, more incomparably sublime. Such, indeed, was the impression produced on the audience that, as she was raising the dagger to stab Egisthus, a momentary interruption was caused by a spectator in the pit exclaiming in a voice half broken by sobs: "Do not kill him, he is your son!" The effect of her performance was

heightened by a happy innovation, which no actor had as yet ventured to attempt. Hitherto it had been considered derogatory to the dignity of tragedy to indulge in any unusual rapidity of movement, and great therefore was the surprise when in the scene where *Mérope* reveals the secret of Egisthus's birth, and thus stays the tyrant's arm about to strike him, Mdlle. Dumesnil darted across the stage in a transport of maternal anguish, threw herself before her son, and strove to shield him from the impending blow. This inspiration, rapturously applauded by the audience, was regarded by Voltaire as a masterpiece of art. "*Mérope*," he said, "is no longer mine, it belongs of right to Mdlle. Dumesnil."

Marmontel, the devoted partisan of Mdlle. Clairon, was, on the contrary, no friend to our heroine, and most unjustly attributed to her the failure of his *Héraclides*, a poor tragedy, which, although supported by the two great rival artists, was withdrawn after the sixth representation; La Harpe also, unmindful of her success as Margaret of Anjou in his own *Warwick*, became during the latter portion of her career her avowed enemy; but, with these two notable exceptions, it may truly be said that from her first to her final appearance on the boards the verdict of her contemporaries was unanimous in her favour. Even the satirical Collé, after qualifying his appreciation, according to his wont, by saying that she only thoroughly satisfied him in fragments of a part, candidly owns that in certain passages she had more force and expression than Mdlle. Lecouvreur. "Where she is good," he adds, "she is above praise, and all her faults and want of personal attractions are alike forgotten."

Besides the characters already cited as having mainly contributed to the reputation of this great artist, we may mention among her most successful personations Zulime, Hécube in *Les Troyens*, and Sémiramis, the costume for which tragedy was presented to her by Madame Dubarry; her essays in comedy were comparatively few, but two of them, says a contemporary writer, would have sufficed to ensure the celebrity of any actress, namely, *La Gouvernante* and *Léonide in Esope à la Cour*. Her last original creation (in 1775) was in Leblanc's *Albert Premier*, a piece totally unworthy of her talent, after which she limited her performances to her three favourite parts, *Mérope*,

Clytemnestre, and *Sémiramis*, until her final retirement, which took place at the close of the theatrical season in 1776. On quitting the stage she became entitled to the usual pension from the *Comédie* of fifteen hundred livres, which was doubled by Louis the Sixteenth; this sum, added to a pension of two thousand livres already conferred on her by Louis the Fifteenth, formed a total of five thousand livres, a very moderate and what would nowadays be considered wholly inadequate recompense for an uninterrupted service of thirty-nine years!

In 1777 her old colleagues, anxious to give her a substantial proof of their attachment, announced a representation for her benefit, consisting of *Tancrède* and *Les Fausses Infidélités*, every part, even the most unimportant, in both pieces being sustained by a leading member of the company; Dugazon, who had none assigned him, declared that, rather than not appear at all, he would come on as a supernumerary, and he kept his word. In the scene of the comedy where Dorimène calls a servant to convey to its destination the letter she has just written, to the surprise and delight of the audience, in marched the popular favourite in a gorgeous suit of livery, took the missive from the lady's hand with a respectful bow, and made his exit amid the cheers of the whole house.

Contrary to what is generally the case, the retirement of Mdlle. Dumesnil occasioned little or no alteration in her ordinary life. As has already been said, she had never cared to exchange her modest independence for social notoriety, nor sought to prolong her prestige as tragedy queen beyond the fall of the curtain. Her attire had always been of the simplest, even during the most brilliant period of her professional career; and of this indifference to admiration and utter lack of coquetry the following instance is recorded by one of her biographers. In 1770, when Mdlle. Clairon, who had left the stage a few years before, was actively engaged in superintending the débuts of her favourite pupil Larive, she expressly stipulated that several ladies of the court and other personages of distinction should be allowed to attend the rehearsals, tickets of admission to which bore her own signature. The piece was *Le Comte d'Essex*, and at the appointed hour the actors arrived, for the most part in full gala costume, in honour of the noble visitors; Mdlle. Clairon, it is hardly

necessary to say, surpassing everyone in the splendour of her toilette. Mdlle. Dumesnil, however, with her ordinary aversion to ceremony, appeared in her everyday dress, and on being reproached by Mdlle. Hus for her negligence, unconcernedly replied that she could rehearse better in her jacket than with a long robe trailing behind her. Mdlle. Clairon, who had overheard the remark, smiled sarcastically, and the ladies in the boxes laughed outright; but their insolence by no means disconcerted the object of their merriment, who, inelegantly accoutred as she was, took up her position on the stage, instinctively assumed the air and attitude of Elizabeth, and before many minutes had elapsed so electrified her hearers by the intensity of her passion that not only the spectators but the actors themselves—to borrow the expression of an eye-witness—were “paralysed.”

A most interesting, and hitherto unpublished, letter to M. d'Argental—the only autograph of Mdlle. Dumesnil we have ever met with, undated, but probably written in 1748—*Sémiramis* having been first performed in that year—contains more than one passage worth extracting, as showing that, with all her celebrity, her position at the *Théâtre Français* was in many respects an unenviable one. After thanking her correspondent for the flattering opinion expressed by him of her *Sémiramis*, and attributing any success she may have obtained in it to the genius of its “sublime” author, she says: “I am naturally simple and confiding, sincere in my friendship and incapable of intrigue, but not without a certain penetration. I was far from suspecting the manœuvres directed against me, although their object was to injure my reputation and discourage whatever talent I may possess. I imagined that my manner of living, and my punctuality in the performance of my duties would protect me from insult, but I was mistaken. I have suffered long and deeply, but cannot bring myself to employ the same weapons against others which they have not scrupled to use against me.” She requests him, in his capacity of “first gentleman of the chamber,” to excuse her from playing an insignificant part in one of Voltaire's tragedies. “You deprive me of the characters best suited to me, and insist on my accepting one which no one else will consent to undertake. Is not this presuming too much on my attachment to you and to M. de Voltaire?”

The Revolution, and the consequent suppression of all government pensions, proved a severe blow to Mdlle. Dumesnil, and during the Reign of Terror she was reduced to a state of absolute indigence. Subsequently, on the establishment of the Consulate, her claims to public sympathy were not forgotten. A lodging in the Palais Royal and a small but sufficient income were accorded her, and her declining years were passed, if not in affluence, at least in comparative ease. She died in Paris—some say at Boulogne-sur-Mer—February 20, 1803, three weeks after her illustrious rival Mdle. Clairon had been consigned to the tomb.

Among the many portraits of this renowned artist the most authentic are the following: a coloured sketch in character, by Janinet; another as Mérope, an admirable likeness, by Foesch; and an engraving by Courbe, published after her retirement, underneath which are inscribed four of the lines already quoted from Dorat's *Déclamation*.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XVII. KATINKA.

THEIR inspection of the stables at Bevis bore out the anticipations of Captain Dunstan and Sir Wilfrid Esdaile, and afforded them a prospect of some congenial occupation. A pair of fat carriage-horses, a chubby pony, whose mission in life had been the drawing of Mrs. Drummond's wheeled-chair along the smooth paths through the park, and a fourth animal, very unlike the other three, were the only tenants of the extensive building. The carriage-horses were old acquaintances of Dunstan's, and if the chubby pony was not the same that he remembered, it was as like as a twin-brother; but he was much taken with the beautiful black mare in the last stall on the right, and asked where she came from, and how long she had been there, with the interest such a subject might be expected to inspire. Esdaile had gone up to the beautiful creature's fine head, and was making friends with her, as it was his way to make friends with all well-conditioned animals. A white porcelain plaque, hanging on the wall over the rack, bore in blue letters the name

"Katinka;" and this was the only case of conformity to the modern fashion of stable-decoration at Bevis; the æsthetic in its application to equine life was unknown there; the stables were merely airy, spacious, and comfortable.

The mare, Captain Dunstan was informed, had been purchased by Mrs. Drummond, shortly after the Admiral's death, for Miss Monroe's use. She carried a lady very well, and had been a great favourite. Miss Monroe had never mounted her since Mrs. Drummond's death.

Katinka was taken out of her stall, and her paces were exhibited. The mare deserved the young men's praise, and doubtless she understood it, for her soft sensitive muzzle went quivering about the coat-sleeves and over the chest of each of them in turn, as though she were swearing eternal friendship in her mute but expressive fashion.

There were no orders about the horses, the coachman observed to his master, except the general orders that everything was to be kept up as usual until Captain Dunstan's arrival; but in case there should be any intention of selling the mare, a lady in the neighbourhood had been making enquiries about her; a young lady she was, only a few weeks in the country, who had heard of the mare through Mrs. Cathcart, the parson's lady, who used to ride out with Miss Monroe sometimes. Her name was Miss Ainslie, and Mr. Ainslie had recently come to The Chantry. He, the coachman, had been asked by Mrs. Cathcart to mention the matter, as Captain Dunstan would not, that lady said, be likely to be wanting a lady's horse.

Dunstan answered carelessly that he did not know, that he would see; and the man's words recalled the subject, which indeed strayed but seldom out of his thoughts, and then only a little way, and conjured up a vision of Laura, as he might have seen her, smiling down on him as she felt Katinka's fine mouth, and patted Katinka's shining satiny neck, which made him grind his teeth with pain and anger.

"Plenty of room here for all you want," said Esdaile, as he and Dunstan walked out of the stableyard, "and not a bad beginning. Mrs. Drummond knew something about horses, judging by that pair and Katinka."

"I wonder you did not know of the mare," said Dunstan, "as she was a favourite with Miss Monroe. She told you

of the peacock, and a lot of other things; it is odd she did not mention her. It seems rather hard on the poor girl to have to give up her horse, doesn't it?"

"A good many things seem rather hard upon the poor girl," answered Esdaile emphatically. "It seems to me Bevis was a sort of earthly paradise to her, and that she is very much to be pitied for having lost it. Your notion of her position with Mrs. Drummond—as I remember you put it to me and Sandilands—must have been very wide of the truth."

"No doubt it was; but how was I to know that Mrs. Drummond, the coldest and most unbending of women to myself, and indeed to other people who had some claim on her, was so uncommonly kind to Miss Monroe, who had none? I knew nothing about it; but I am learning something new on the subject every hour since I arrived here; and to tell you the truth, it makes me feel very uncomfortable."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I forgot all about her—ignored her completely; and now when I see her I shall feel almost as if I had turned her out of house and home. I wish—I wonder whether she would let me make her a present of the mare?"

"Of course she would not. Why, Dunstan, just think; even if she would take her, she could not keep her at Bury House. I daresay she never spoke to me of Katinka, on purpose that you should not find out that she was so fond of the mare, and that she never mounted her after Mrs. Drummond's death, so that she might not seem to have any kind of claim to her."

"Very likely you are right. I suppose all that sort of thing is only proper pride, but I'm very sorry for it. I wish my good luck had not brought sorrow and trouble to anyone except myself."

"Miss Monroe must have lost her home at Bevis at any rate. I do not think she will be unhappy with her old friends; and it must have been lonely for her here of late."

"She was evidently everything to Mrs. Drummond. No matter what I have spoken of, or to whom, I have heard of Miss Monroe's care, Miss Monroe's arrangements, Miss Monroe's directions; and I cannot discern that the people disliked her either. I should have thought they would."

"Nonsense! Dunstan; you don't know

her," interrupted Esdaile. "Miss Monroe is much too serene and lofty a person for the sort of thing you mean. You did not take the trouble to know anything about her, except that she was rather good-looking, though not your style, when you saw her here, and I assure you she will strike you as being a very superior young lady——"

"My dear fellow, you are quite right. Perhaps I don't particularly care for superior young ladies, but I assure you I am prepared to find Miss Monroe everything that is most charming of that description. Only the fact of her being so makes it more instead of less awkward for me; I could so much more easily apologise to a commonplace person. Who is that at the door? An early visitor, whoever he may be."

As the friends approached the house the door was opened, and the servant, perceiving them, answered the stranger's enquiry by indicating them as his master and Sir Wilfrid Esdaile respectively. The stranger, a tall, well-looking, strongly-built man of about forty, who wore a long single-breasted coat, and a felt hat with a soft crown, descended the broad doorsteps and advanced to meet them. Then Captain Dunstan recognised him as Mr. Cathcart, the vicar of the parish, whom he had seen but once previously, on the occasion of Admiral Drummond's funeral, and the three gentlemen entered the house together.

Mr. Cathcart explained his early visit by the circumstance that he had to leave home for a week on that afternoon, and had not wished to defer until his return the renewal of his acquaintance with Captain Dunstan, whose nearest neighbour he was. Indeed the vicarage-garden adjoined the park-wall of Bevis. Mr. Cathcart proved to be a pleasant man, with broad notions, though, Dunstan perceived with regret, no sporting tendencies—he did not even confess to a mild taste for fishing—and, naturally, he had just that thorough knowledge of the neighbourhood which could be made useful to a new-comer, anxious to be popular and to avoid mistakes; both which desires Dunstan entertained, notwithstanding that his heart was sore and heavy within him.

"I have but one old acquaintance on this side of the county," said Dunstan, "and perhaps I ought not to call him so, for I only knew him coming home from India: Mr. Ainslie, who has bought a

little place that used to be called The Chantry."

"It is called The Chantry still," said Mr. Cathcart, "and Mr. Ainslie is my wife's uncle."

"Indeed! Then that accounts for Miss Ainslie's knowing so much about Bevis, which surprised me, I remember, when I met them coming home. More of the half-dozen people in the world, you see, Esdaile! I hope Mr. Ainslie's hopes of rural felicity will be thoroughly realised."

"H—m!" said the vicar, dubiously; "I have not much faith in the realisation of any notions of felicity which consist of giving up the work of one's life at fifty. However, it is too soon to judge in this case. Miss Ainslie likes it, and that's an important point."

"I should think so," said Dunstan, laughing.

After a little more talk Mr. Cathcart went away, having delivered a friendly message from his wife to the two young men, to the effect that she would be glad to see them at her five-o'clock tea-table, if they were not otherwise engaged.

"And I suppose you are not," added Mr. Cathcart, "as you will hardly have made your arrangements for regular killing, here or elsewhere, as yet."

Dunstan promised, a little formally, to present himself, with his friend, at the vicarage at five o'clock. It did not much matter that the parson should not care for sport, but that he should laugh, ever so mildly, at those who had the proper appreciation of that noble pursuit was, to say the least of it, questionable taste. So solemnly was Dunstan, after a brief term of landed proprietorship, beginning to take to the position.

The vicarage was a pretty house, standing in a trim lawn with well-tended flowerbeds, and greatly dignified and beautified by the aid of the noble ranges of elms that overshadowed it on two sides. These belonged to the Bevis park, from which the vicarage was separated only by a wall, so thickly clothed on both sides with ivy that it was hidden in green, and so low that from the farther, or house, side, a charming uninterrupted view of the wide-spread glades and great avenues of trees was obtained. At a little distance beyond the vicarage, and occupying the only eminence for miles around, stood the church, an ancient structure, surrounded by grass-grown graves and old tombstones. The church and the churchyard

contrasted strongly with the vicarage; the latter was a bright and cheerful place, the vicar and his wife being socially inclined, and, though childless, fond of young people. There was a neatly-kept croquet-ground in a sheltered angle behind the vicarage-house, and Mrs. Cathcart had a well-deserved reputation for the successful promotion and carrying-out of picnic parties. In the parish and among the poor she was active without being meddlesome, and kind without being inquisitorial—on the whole, a useful and worthy person, and just now in rather low spirits, as she was explaining to a young friend, who had come to see her unexpectedly, on the very afternoon when she had invited the new arrivals at Bevis to afternoon tea at the vicarage.

"It is not always true," Mrs. Cathcart is saying, "that one does not know the value of anything until one has lost it; for I did know it, I thoroughly understood her usefulness, and how helpless I should feel without her. She understood everything without explanations; she managed everything without fuss; and if you knew what schools, and old women, and visiting ladies, and clergywoman's business in general signifies, you would know what a help she was, and what a loss she is."

"I can guess, though I don't know much about such things," said the visitor. "I never had anything to do in India, and here I have to make out occupation for myself. There does not seem to be any place specially prepared for me, and into which nobody else would fit; and though I have things a good deal my own way, and like it, it is a little dull, even now, while it is quite new—and novelty, after India, is a fine thing, you must know, almost apart from its kind. I don't suppose, though, I could be of much use to you, even if I were nearer. A 'right hand' at Bevis cannot be replaced."

"Besides, you must help in your own parish," said Mrs. Cathcart; "there's plenty to do there when you drop into the way of doing it. No; I must only get used to my loss, and live in hope that Captain Dunstan will bring a nice wife to Bevis, and be quick about it too. An important place of that sort without a woman at the head of it is a misfortune."

Mrs. Cathcart glanced rather meaningly at her visitor, who was noiselessly rummaging a bookshelf during this conversation, and who now looked up at her, from the title-page of the last volume she had

taken down, with frank and fearless eyes.

"I should think so," she said, "especially after such a vice-royalty as you have described. This is the book I wanted. The ponies are rested by this time, so I think I had better go."

"No, don't," said Mrs. Cathcart, and now she fired a shot with intention, and watched for its effect; "I expect a visit from Captain Dunstan presently. Mr. Cathcart called on him this morning. You may as well stay, as you know him already."

"Very well, I don't mind," replied the visitor, with perfect unconcern, "only I have seen him since he came to England, and indeed, we came down from town together. He talked of coming over to The Chantry soon, and I hope he will do so. Papa is longing to get hold of somebody to talk India to, and though Captain Dunstan hated it, he is so good-natured he never minded papa's stories."

"Very good-natured, is he? That is a good quality."

"Yes, but it is not a great one. Not that one wants people to be great, in a general way, so much as not to be small, and not to be tiresome. We liked him—at least papa and I liked him. Mamma never takes to invalids, and you know Captain Dunstan was coming home 'sick,' as they elegantly express it. He seems all right again now: cured by Bevis—and how many thousands a year is it?—no doubt."

The ingenious and hopeful idea that Mrs. Cathcart had conceived faded from her brain, as Miss Ainslie uttered the foregoing sentences, in her quick airy manner, without the very smallest change of colour or countenance.

If, however, Mrs. Cathcart saw nothing conscious in her cousin's face, Miss Ainslie, who was very quick, and by no means devoid of humour, detected something odd and discomfited in Mrs. Cathcart's acceptance of her remarks, and swiftly interpreting its meaning, laughed with a heartfelt merriment which made her hazel eyes sparkle, and touched up her pretty dimples quite bewitchingly. Mrs. Cathcart stared at the girl, who laughed only more merrily than before, threw down her book, and popping down on her knees beside her cousin's chair, said, with uplifted finger and a comical look:

"So that was your little plan, was it? And I was to have all my duties explained

to me, and to be fortified by the example of the peerless Miss Monroe. Oh my cousin—dear, designing—are you one of the matchmakers who haven't even the excuse of being mammas?"

"My dear Amabel, I—I don't understand—I have not said anything."

"Certainly not; you only looked unutterable things, and I found you out in a minute. Well then, as I have found you out, I will tell you all about it."

Miss Ainslie here pulled off her bonnet, shook her bright brown locks, which she wore in a becoming towzley style, off her forehead, and subsided into a comfortable sitting posture at Mrs. Cathcart's feet.

"The all I have to tell you," said she, with mischievous gravity, "is precisely nothing. If any young woman should ever attempt to make you believe that she did not flirt, just a little, and within the most strictly justifiable bounds, either going out to India or coming home therefrom, don't believe her. I have no intention of so deceiving. Never mind about going out—I was only a schoolgirl then, and my chaperon had a very pretty taste of her own for flirtation, and the truth is, I did not get a fair chance—coming home is the matter in hand. Captain Dunstan would not flirt with me! There's an admission for you! I tried to make him—I tried hard—I tried in vain! Only for a little while, I beg you to observe—unlike the British warrior of history and legend, I know not only when I am beaten, but when I am going to be; and I retired gracefully. I don't think he ever discovered my designs on his peace, and we became very good friends without any preliminary stages of agitation—on his part."

"On his part, Amabel! That's an admission!"

"Not a bit of it," said Miss Ainslie, with another clearance of her forehead from her bright locks, and much destructive twisting of her bonnet-strings; "the agitation on my part, all the damage sustained, indeed, was simply to my vanity, and it was of the slightest. I could not have fallen in love with Captain Dunstan if I had tried ever so hard, or if he had been ever so ready to reciprocate or even to anticipate the sentiment; and therefore you may take my opinion of him as worth something. He is a good-looking, gentlemanly, superficial, good-natured young man, with something romantic and depth-suggesting in his face

and manners, but he has neither romance nor depth in him; he could be obstinate I think, and he is, I should say, of a discontented disposition; but he can be very agreeable when he likes, and no doubt as things have gone with him he will like always, or almost always, at present. You would find him charming—I do, I assure you."

Mrs. Cathcart shook her head.

"I don't know," she said; "your portrait does not charm me. In such a position as his, there's a great deal of good or harm for a man to do, and——"

"He will do nothing but good if he's only properly managed, and cleverly led; and I do believe that is the reason why I never could have cared a dump—no, that's vulgar, I withdraw the expression—a straw about him."

"Then I'm sure I wonder," said Mrs. Cathcart, "considering the contradictions that are always turning up in human affairs, and especially love affairs—I wonder he did not lose his heart to you."

Miss Ainslie smiled—it was a very pretty, sly, meaning little smile—as she replied:

"It is unaccountable—or at least it would be if I had not satisfactorily accounted for it to myself. To use your own elegant expression—you have been reading old novels, I see—I feel pretty sure that when Captain Dunstan stood my fire, not only unharmed, but unconscious, he had no heart to lose."

"Really! Then, my dear Amabel, who is she?—and how did you find it out?"

"I did not find it out, I only divined it; I could not in the least tell you how, but I am as sure of the fact as of my existence. And I have not the remotest notion who she is. She isn't in India, that I am convinced of, for I did elicit from Captain Dunstan that he had never seen a woman worth looking at twice from the time he left England until he had the good fortune, &c. &c."

Miss Ainslie supplied the conclusion of the sentence by an expressive flourish of her pretty fingers about her pretty face. And then she laughed merrily again, and rising from her lowly position on the carpet, said, while tying her bonnet-strings:

"No, no; she isn't in India, she's in England, and there's no good in laying any charitable little plots for the matri-

monial sacrifice of Captain Dunstan to the good of the parish. And now, I'm off, because the interesting being will be arriving presently, and after all this talk about him, into which you have beguiled me, I should infallibly blush, according to my detestable practice, on seeing him, and I would rather not do that."

"How absurd you are," said Mrs. Cathcart, "after what you have just said of your perfect indifference to him even while you—you——"

"Yes, just so; but you see I feel guilty, for somehow or other I found out a secret about him, and now I've told it."

She rang the bell, and ordered her pony-carriage, and Mrs. Cathcart had to let her go.

Miss Ainslie did not, nevertheless, escape seeing Captain Dunstan, for not a hundred yards from the gate she encountered him, with Sir Wilfrid Esdaile, walking towards the vicarage. On perceiving Miss Ainslie, Dunstan stepped forward, and she pulled up her ponies, and conversed with him for a few minutes without the slightest embarrassment, probably because Mrs. Cathcart was not there to look for the apprehended blush. Dunstan presented Sir Wilfrid Esdaile, and an early day was named for their visit to The Chantry.

As Miss Ainslie drove on, her ponies' hoofs and the bells on their collars making a pleasant merry music, the friends stood still for a few moments, looking after her.

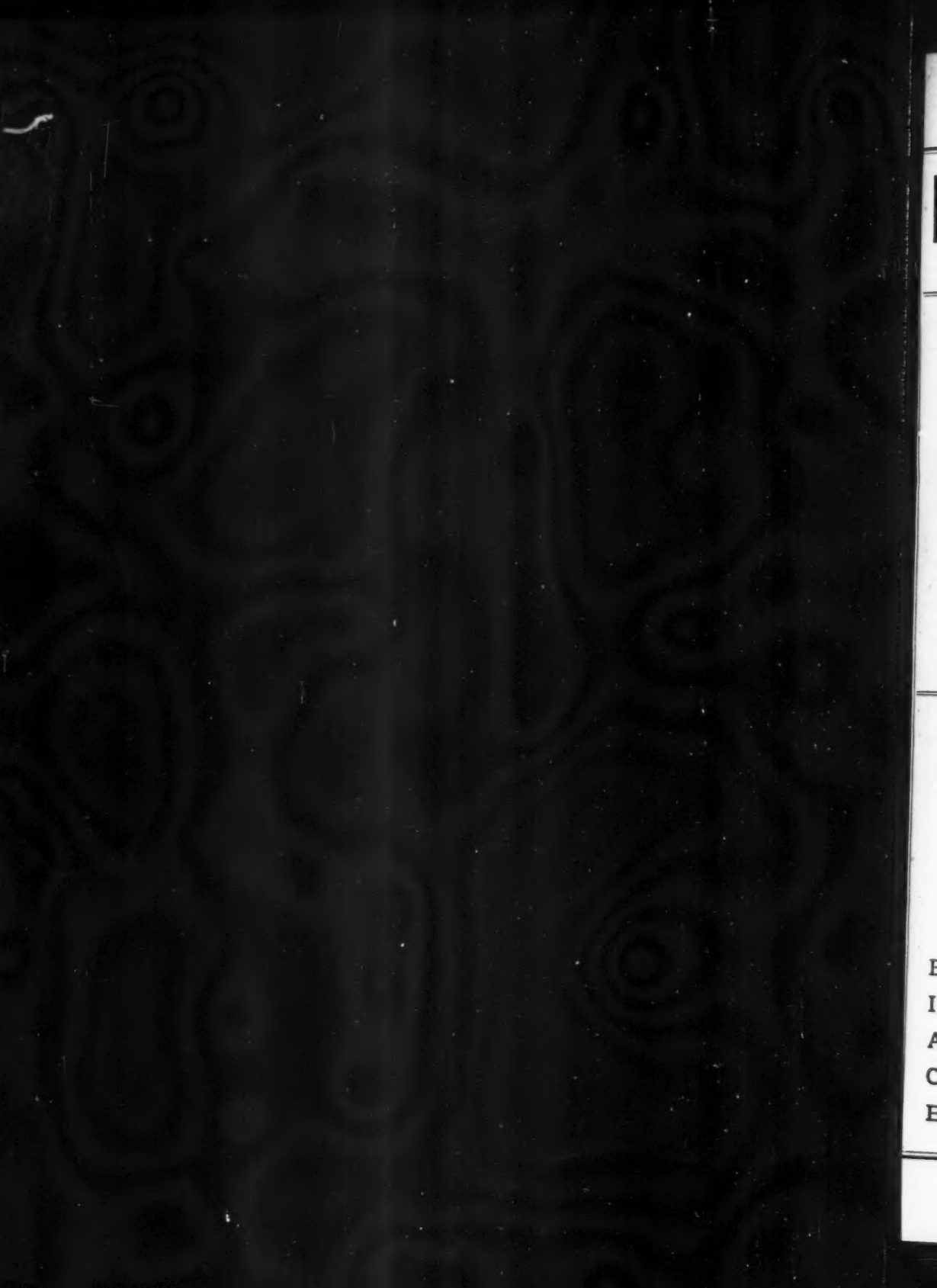
"She is very pretty," said Sir Wilfrid Esdaile; "I don't wonder at old Gilchrist's indignant wonder that she should come back to England Miss Ainslie still. Didn't your coachman say it was she who had been asking about Katinka?"

"He meant her; he said Mrs. Cathcart would speak to me. I don't want the mare, of course; but Ainslie does not know as much about horses as he knows about pigs, and he prefers the pigs, and the mare's too good for a girl who rattles her ponies along at that rate."

"Much too good," said Esdaile, "and, indeed, Dunstan, I have been thinking all day of asking you to let me have her. She is just what I have been looking for, and we can easily find something to suit Miss Ainslie."

Dunstan agreed, and the "deal" was concluded before they reached the vicarage-gate.

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